AI Overview

May Day celebrations at U.S. women's colleges, peaking from the late 19th century through the 1950s, served as a festive spring rite, featuring maypole dances, pageantry, and the crowning of a May Queen. Originating as a way to promote wholesome outdoor activity and spring traditions, these events fostered community, with seniors leading processions. National Museum of American History +3

Key Aspects of College May Day:

- **Rituals:** Central to the celebration were dancing around a Maypole, crowning a May Queen, and processions.
- **Performances:** Celebrations often included Morris dancing, Scottish dancing, class plays, and a cappella concerts.
- **History:** The tradition was heavily featured at women's colleges and institutions like Wilson College, JMU, and Averett University.
- **Evolution:** In the 1960s and 70s, interest waned as the, often criticised, "popularity contest" of the May Queen became less appealing.
- **Legacy:** Many schools transitioned these events into "Spring Fling" festivals, combining traditional maypole dancing with modern campus activities. James Madison University +3

These celebrations often served as important fundraising opportunities for women's athletic associations on campus. Ames History Museum